

# SAFETY MEMO

June 14, 2021 – Fire Extinguishers

Did you know?

## What is a portable fire extinguisher for?

A portable extinguisher is used to extinguish small fires and to reduce the material damage associated. Purchase of a portable fire extinguisher for a few tens of dollars could possibly save your life and your property.

## What type of extinguisher to buy?

Since there are several types of fire extinguishers, it is important to use the following tips to make an informed choice.

- The extinguisher must bear the seal of approval from a recognized organization.
- At home, it is recommended to have an ABC type fire extinguisher with a capacity of 5 and 10 pounds.
- An ABC type powder extinguisher can extinguish most fires. The device can extinguish fires of different classes:
  - Class A: **ordinary fuels** (paper, wood, fabrics).
  - Class B: **flammable liquids** (gasoline, oil, grease, solvents, paint).
  - Class C: **electrical appliances** (electrical panels, stove, motors, electrical wires).
- In the factory, depending on the location, it is sometimes preferable to have a more specific type. ABC type powder is corrosive to electrical components while CO<sub>2</sub> (C type) is not.

## Location

Fire extinguishers must always be accessible, visible, close to an emergency exit, and easy to access. It should be installed on a support provided for this purpose, between 4 inches and 5 feet from the ground and away from electrical appliances.

Operating instructions must be visible, and the label indicating the date of the last inspection or maintenance must not be removed.

At home, the location of a portable fire extinguisher should take into account that the majority of home fires start in the kitchen or bedroom. The main causes of fires are related to human activity (cooking fires, smoking items, etc.).<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Examples of typical portable fire extinguishers

## Usage

- Make sure that the premises have been evacuated and that it is safe for you to use the portable extinguisher. Call 9-1-1 before using the extinguisher, if required.
- Stand about 3 m (10 feet) from the source of the fire.
- Make sure that an emergency exit is available behind you before intervening.
- Remember **Pull-Aim-Squeeze-Sweep (PASS)**
- **Pull:** Remove the pin.
- **Aim:** Aim the hose at the base of the flames.
- **Squeeze:** Firmly squeeze the top handle or lever to release the extinguishing powder.
- **Sweep:** Sweep the base of the flames (movement from left to right) until the fire is completely out.
- Leave the residence, close the door behind you and wait for the arrival of the fire department.

## Maintenance

- Refer to the user manual provided by the manufacturer for recommended maintenance.
- Check visually every month (pressure indicator, rust, corrosion).
- Invert and shake (upside down) to decompact the powder in suspension.
- Replace portable single-use extinguishers after 6 years.

<sup>1</sup> Fire Cause and Circumstance Investigation Section. Report on the activities of the Montreal Fire Department 2013.

